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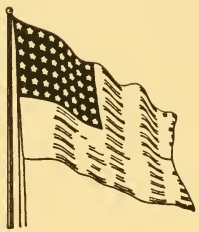
When the Star Spangled Banner Sounded *Best* to Him

When the Star Spangled Banner Cheered His Lonely Heart and Sounded *Best* to Him

Being the Experience of a Soldier of the A. E. F. and a French Child

From Mrs. Blanche E. Little



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"God give us men.
A time like this,
demands strong minds,
great hearts, true faith
and ready hands."

HER BOY, WHO AS A SMALL CHILD, SAID "I CANNOT SING, BUT I CAN FIGHT"

The way these Yanks have come back. Not a growl or grumble. Lots of "pep" and a determination, that now, that they've done their part in righting the world, to assume some responsibility in the reconstruction

Lieutenant "Dick" Andrew W. Little

Apologia

This literary trifle was written in a hurry and under very unfavorable circumstances. The war was over. The only son was safely back. The household goods from the home in Chicago, were packed and stored. My lares and penates were abandoned. If Dick was going back to Oklahoma, so was I. We turned our backs on the city and went to the country — the old home "Oakland" on the Mississippi River. After a few days' rest, Dick went on to the southwest. Left alone, as it were, I began to realize that "war is never paid for until afterwards." The strain under which I had worked during the war, was telling on me. I felt worn and weary beyond expression. The daily rural route brought me a stack of mail. All magazines and papers were turned over to the tenants. I told them I did not want to look at a magazine or read a paper. They took me literally and very carefully tried to keep all reading matter out of my sight, though occasionally, I would hear a newspaper rustling in another room.

One day in walking around the yard, I noticed in the blue grass, a torn yellow, dirty, jagged-edged piece of newspaper, not as large as the palm of my hand. I stooped and picked it up, intending to put it in the stove. My eye lit on, "Fatherless children of France," and I was at once alert and interested, and I read on. I could just make out that this society, which was caring for many thousands of French children, whose fathers had been killed in the war, were advertising for a story, to be based upon the experience of some soldier of the A. E. F. and a French child. A cash

prize was offered. The date for the story to be in, was given. To make this, the manuscript must leave when the next R. R. delivery came along. There was just time to write my story (for I had the incident) in longhand, and get it off on the next mail — no typewriter handy — no time for corrections or re-writing. It was a case of write and run and get it to the end of the lane, before the rural mail carrier came along. The story was postmarked at an obscure Mississippi Valley postoffice.

In due time a reply came, that to say the least was *surprising*. Where had I *heard* this story? If I had *read* it in some paper or magazine, would I give the "source," etc. My first impulse was to write on the bottom of the letter "Oh piffle" and mail it back. Then I thought better of that, and wrote, that the officer mentioned was my only son and gave them his address. I also gave the address of the French child and referred them to the New York publisher for whom I had worked for years. I assured them I had never lacked for copy. Then a letter of a different tone came, with a check enclosed. As it was all being done for "Sweet Charity's Sake" the check was returned. Now — go ahead and read the story.

The Story

Dick, that really is his nick name, had resigned as mayor of the town that his father had started, and of which his father had been the first mayor and he the twelfth, to go and take the examination for the training camp. He wrote his mother, "I think that I have passed and I hope that I get to go." The San Antonio *Express* of October 1, 1917, speaking of men at Camp Stanley, Leon Springs, said "At the Officer's Reserve Camp among other well-known Oklahomans, is the mayor of Cushing, Okla., an enlisted man, and one who can write his check for several figures. The mayor is a private of infantry, and is lugging his pack with all the *sang froid* of a peddler."

Such young men went to war not to fight for loot, or for annexations, or for indemnities for punitive damages — they went for the highest and noblest motives, to establish liberty and justice throughout the world — and to overthrow tyranny and militarism.

After being appointed a first lieutenant at the Officers' Training Camp, came a hurried trip to Chicago to see mother. During his short stay in the city, Dick one evening attended the Horse Show at the Stock Yards. When the band played The Star Spangled Banner, he, on one side of that vast amphitheater and another officer on the opposite side, arose and stood at attention, until the last strain was played. These two evidently were the only army officers present. This incident recalled to mother, the time long before the war, when attending some entertainment at the

Coliseum, the band played our National Anthem, and a man in the gallery arose and stood at salute. The lady with her giggled and said, "See that big goose; what ails him?" "Not so," replied Dick's mother, "that man knows exactly what he is doing. He is an army officer, and if he failed to stand at attention, no matter where he hears that piece, he is liable to court martial."

After a brief stay in Chicago, Dick reported back to his training camp. Then he was appointed Adjutant and ordered to Kelley Field, the large aviation camp out of San Antonio. Then came the wire that said, "Am leaving in the morning for France." Then came short letters and cards dropped en route from New Orleans, Montgomery, then from places along the Atlantic Coast, until New York, the Battery, the Brooklyn Bridge, and finally the aviation camp at Mineola, Long Island, was reached. From here he wrote to his mother, in the postscript of which he said, "Do not be alarmed at the tone of the above. We soldiers without being professing Christians, are in the habit of holding ourselves ready for the *Ultima Ratio*, whenever our country calls for our services."

Then there was the long and nerve-racking silence, until came the cable — wireless and, "without location" — Arrived safely." The next morning the paper's headline told of one of our troop ships being torpedoed and the terrific loss of life. That day a telegram to Dick's mother came from an army officer in New York, who had official information regarding all troop ships; it said, "The ship on which your son sailed, has landed safely."

Through Scotland, England and to France, where Officer Dick's work took him from camp to camp; only a few weeks in any one place, and ready to move any time on a few hours notice — seldom long enough in one place, for his mail to catch up with him.

One chilly morning he arrived at Tours. He had the address of a French family with whom an American officer might secure a room. The French law in regard to the use of gasoline, put the possibility of securing a taxi out of the question. All vehicles were away at the front, then what was he to get, to haul his baggage?

An old Frenchman with a one-dog-power cart, was all that was available. Onto this cart Dick's luggage was piled, locker, grip, duffle bag, bed roll. It made a heavy load for the one medium-sized, shaggy brown dog to haul — but he tugged and pulled and seemed to delight in his task. The old Frenchman understood little American (over there it is not English) and Dick understood only training camp French; so in order that his various belongings might go to the right place, the officer had to accompany the outfit. Here was something new — a dog actually working and working hard, too, and apparently loving his task. This was so different from the pack of twelve beautiful grey hounds Dick as a boy had owned on the frontier. They were such happy care-free creatures, such aristocrats of dog-dom. With a lump in his throat, and an ache in his heart, the young officer stooped and patted the dog of the work-a-day, French world, and said, "Good dog, you are some dog; you are a fine fellow; you surely are doing your bit." The dog wagged his tail and looked at the young stranger, as much as to say, "I am *so glad*, I can do this for *you*."

On the way through the narrow streets, a dog outfit, similar to theirs, though without any load, was met. The dog with no load was evidently a "slacker" or a bolsheviki, for he refused to give any of the road. The dog with the heavy load growled and as much as said, "In the name of kindness and decency, give me part of the road; I am trying to do my bit by helping this young soldier along." Dog number two was stubborn and unreasonable. No road would *he*

give. Dog number one let out a fierce growl, and right then and there occurred a unique dog fight. The air was full of growls and howls, and mouthfuls of dog-hair flew right and left. Then came peace and Mr. Heavily-loaded Dog (I think it should be spelled with a capital now) secured his rights and went tugging along to the Faivré home, where he was to leave his load.

Dick found comfortable quarters with Messieur, Madam and young Gaston Faivré, ten years old. The room of the older son of the family, who was with the aviators at the front, was given the lieutenant. An amusing incident while in this hospitable home, was the fact that when Officer Dick gave madam his laundry to send away, some of his khaki handkerchiefs were not returned. After the third week he asked about them. She produced the dreadful missing articles, but with a truly distressed look on her face — in her broken American she finally made him understand that what was worrying her, was the fact that he, an American officer, should have "Berlin" on his clothes. On some of his handkerchiefs, worked by machine across one corner was "Berlin or bust." Now madam had no doubt been to the Prefect of police and others. As "or bust" is one of our slang phrases, no one there knew what it meant. Even those who knew some American did not know what that stood for. When Dick finally understood what was worrying the good lady, he, in his broken and training camp French, explained to her that all A. E. F. soldiers hoped to *reach Berlin* before the war was over. Finally he said, "*Nous allons à Berlin*" (we are going to Berlin). At which she seemed satisfied and the rest of the family said, "tres bien" (very good). Everything was lovely after that. Every possible kindness was shown the American officer. Even the family cat took possession of his bed roll and purred when he came in. He "never had cared much for cats" but this cat — why it was really

GASTON FAIVRÉ, TOURS, FRANCE

He was known in Tours as the little French boy, who saluted every American soldier whom he met

a very pretty animal and that purr sounded quite musical — he believed that it was rather prettier than the strains from Master Gaston's practising on the piano downstairs. Then, too, did he not remember having heard that mother as a girl was very fond of cats, and that once she was very indignant at a school mate who told that she had twenty-six cats — such a story! Why, she only had sixteen. He smiled at the recollection; then he looked sober and sad. *Why* no word from mother or anyone else for weeks? If it were only a line so he could know all was well with those nearest and dearest to him. Three weeks in Tours and still no word from home.

The Faivré family were kindness itself. On May 1, a bunch of lilies of the valley were left in his room, and a May Day (Mai) greeting written in French was with the flowers. This is much the same custom as children hanging May Day baskets of flowers on the doors in this country.

Master Gaston stopped his practising when he came in. A neatly kept room; his clothes nicely laundered and mended, showed the care of Madam Faivré. Father Faivré invited him in one evening to share a bottle of Vouvray wine. But to Master Gaston was left the task and wonderful practising, that was to be the climax, the Grand Finale of the Faivré family to Officer Dick.

One evening, worn and weary beyond expression, and with a blinding headache, such a loneliness and longing as he had never known, Oh! *why* was there no word from home? As he lifted his cap that evening entering the Faivré home, a strain of music struck his ear. He was alert, all attention — what was this? It was Master Gaston at the piano playing our National Anthem; with a double-quick step, the adjutant was at salute beside the piano. When Gaston finished he was given a regular American bear hug. "Bravo," said Dick; "you are a *wonderful* boy to play that

piece." Then he went whistling upstairs to find the accumulated mail of weeks piled high in his room. It just seemed to Lieutenant Dick that all that good news came floating in on the strains of *The Star Spangled Banner.*

CAMP FUNSTON, TEXAS, SEPTEMBER, 1917

Name of Funston was changed to Stanley because there was another Camp Funston out of Leavenworth, Kansas, and two camps by the same name made confusion

In 1925 Gaston Faivré still plays The Star Spangled Banner

OUR NATIONAL ANTHEM

THE STAR SPANGLED BANNER

Begins with a question and ends with a prayer. It breathes a spirit which has animated the loyalty of Americans ever since that historic and notable night in which it was composed. It proclaims that trust and declares that faith which has ever guided this Republic in its course. Its message has been woven into the highest aspirations of our national consciousness.

The music of this song has encircled the world and whenever heard stirs the heart to renewed allegiance. It stands unique in its lonely, beautiful grandeur and should invoke from millions today the same enthusiasm with which it was first greeted. The prayer with which it closes, expresses the faith our Pilgrim and Revolutionary fathers cherished and brings to us their benediction.

The Star Spangled Banner! The glorious symbol of the spirit of America. Men stand with bared head and women with their right hand over their heart and in silence, as the flag passes and the strains of its music floats upon the air.

STAR SPANGLED BANNER

As used by National Society, Daughters of the American Revolution

Oh, say, can you see, by the dawn's early light,
What so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming;
Whose broad stripes and bright stars, through the perilous flight,
O'er the ramparts we watched, were so gallantly streaming;
And the rocket's red glare, the bombs bursting in air,
Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there.

FIRST CHORUS

Oh, say, does the star-spangled banner yet wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

On the shore, dimly seen thro' the mists of the deep,
Where the foe's haughty host in dread silence reposes,
What is that which the breeze, o'er the towering steep,
As it fitfully blows, half conceals, half discloses?
Now it catches the gleam of the morning's first beam,
In full glory reflected now shines on the stream.

SECOND CHORUS

'Tis the star-spangled banner, oh! long may it wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

When our land is illum'd with liberty's cry,
If a foe from within strike a blow at her glory,
Down, down with the traitor that dares to defile
The flag of her stars and the page of her story;
By the millions unchain'd who our birthright have gain'd
We will keep her bright blazon forever unstain'd.

THIRD CHORUS

And the star-spangled banner in triumph doth wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

Oh! thus be it ever when free men shall stand,
Between their loved home and the war's desolation,
Blest with vict'ry and peace, may the heav'n rescued land
Praise the Pow'r that hath made and preserved us a Nation
Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just,
And this be our motto, "In God is our trust."

FOURTH CHORUS

And the star-spangled banner in triumph shall wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

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